The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. REID. Before the majority leader goes to the next item, it is going to be extremely difficult to finish this most important bill tomorrow. Senator WYDEN has worked so hard on this with others. Senator BOXER, Senator FEINSTEIN, a number of other people on our side of the aisle have worked very hard. We are going to send out a hotline in the morning to find out what amendments are around. We already have some knowledge of the amendments, but it is going to take a lot of cooperation and a lot of people cutting down speeches tomorrow if we are going to finish this bill tomorrow night, which is the desire of the two leaders.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kentucky.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 2800

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I am pleased to announce to our colleagues and obviously the leader that we have reached an agreement that will allow us to wrap up the foreign operations bill in relatively short order in the next day or two. I am about to propound a unanimous consent agreement that has been agreed to by the other side.

I ask unanimous consent that the only first-degree amendments remaining in order to the Foreign Operations bill be the following, and that they be subject to second-degrees which are relevant to the first: DeWine No. 1966; Feinstein No. 1977; McConnell No. 1970; one McConnell technical, and two McConnell relevants; a Frist relevant; Allard-Feingold-Leahy, Indonesia; Durbin on AIDS; Bingaman on AIDS; two Leahy relevant; Daschle relevant; McConnell-Leahy cleared managers' amendment.

I further ask unanimous consent that following the disposition of the above listed amendments, the bill be read a third time and the Senate proceed to a vote on passage of the bill with no intervening action or debate. Further, I ask unanimous consent that following passage of the bill, the Senate insist on its amendments, request a conference with the House, and the Chair be authorized to appoint conferees on the part of the Senate, which will consist of the subcommittee plus Senator STEVENS and Senator BYRD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. MCCONNELL. I yield the floor.

CLIMATE STEWARDSHIP ACT OF 2003

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Committee on Environment and Public Works is discharged from further consideration of S. 139, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 139) to provide for a program of scientific research on abrupt bankrupt climate change, to accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States by establishing a market-driven system of greenhouse gas tradeable allowances that could be used interchangeably with passenger vehicle fuel economy standard credits, to limit greenhouse gas emissions in the United States and reduce dependence upon foreign oil, and ensure benefits to consumers from the trading in such allowances.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oklahoma.

Mr. INHOFE. Mr. President, it is my understanding there are 3 hours tonight equally divided, which would be an hour and a half for each side. Because of something that happened today in Colorado, I yield up to 7 minutes of our time to the Senator from Colorado, Mr. ALLARD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado.

FIRES IN COLORADO

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I thank the Senator from Oklahoma for yielding.

Today in Colorado we had two fires erupt in the State. One was a grassland fire that probably won't amount to much. The other is a very serious fire that happened north and west of Boulder and Jamestown. We have a school that has been evacuated; 300 people have been evacuated. There is an educational camp in the area that has been evacuated. The reason I bring this to the attention of the Senate at this particular point in time is because Colorado is one of those areas in the western part of the United States where we have a forest/urban interface. That is what the Forest Health Restoration Act is all about, trying to provide a program where we can begin to apply the principles of forest health.

Along the Front Range of Colorado, running all the way from Colorado Springs all the way up into Fort Collins, including Boulder, where this fire has broken out, there are a lot of homes being built into the forest. Of course, if you don't practice good forest health, then they become vulnerable to fires that could erupt.

The significant thing about what is happening today is this is not the fire season for Colorado. The fire season occurs in September, perhaps the first part of September, August, and July. Here we are, just 3 days from the first of November, and we have a fire that is breaking out with serious consequences in Colorado.

This again points out the need for us to move forward with this particular piece of legislation. We need to be addressing this problem immediately in areas such as what we are seeing here in the State of Colorado.

Last year during the peak of the Hayman Fire, the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains was covered in a thick blanket of smoke and ash that blocked visibility and dropped ash on surrounding towns and cities, creating a winter-like scene in the midst of a Colorado June. The Hayman Fire was the largest in Colorado history and cost $40 million and counting. It burned a little over 137,000 acres, destroyed 133 homes, and 466 outbuildings. The fire burned for 30 days. The Colorado State Forest Service has advised that it will take up to 150 years for the forest itself to be reestablished.

Some people ask, Why does it take so long? We are in a semi-arid area. Vegetation does not grow back rapidly. During the Hayman Fire, 142 subdivisions were evacuated along with 85,000 people.

Wildfires present a major cause of pollution, triggering severe asthma-related breathing problems and commonly causing death. Wildfires are also a major source of pollution. If we take 1 day out of the Hayman Fire, on June 10, 2002, the CO_2 gas emissions from the Hayman Fire surpassed the CO_2 emissions from all passenger cars operating in the United States on that same day. So this problem with a lot of undergrowth in the forests and trees being infested with beetles and a lot of dead and dying timber has made our forests extremely vulnerable in the forest/urban interface area.

Federal land management procedures are very complex. They should not be so complex that they prevent timely action to address ecological crises on public lands. Forest Service officials have estimated that planning an assessment consumes 40 percent of their time at the national forest level, costing more than $250 million per year. Although much of this work is important, the officials estimate that improving administrative procedures may allow agencies to redirect up to $100 million a year from unnecessary planning to actual forest health restoration where it will improve the ecosystem and protect local communities from catastrophic fires which we see erupting today in Boulder County.

The Front Range in Colorado also depends on the mountains to provide drinking water and water for gardens and children. But devastating fires threaten and destroy watersheds that yield this water. Catastrophic blazes consume organic matter in the littler layer of the soil and create a hard pan surface that impedes water penetration.

When water flows over this hydrophobic layer, it carries debris, mud, and causes soil loss, clogging municipal water treatment facilities, affecting water quality, flavoring water with ash, and costing millions to rehabilitate. This is the problem we face today from the Hayman Fire which occurred just a year ago.

In 2002, there were over 88,000 fires that burned 7 million acres. Thousands of structures were burned: 835 primary residences, 46 commercial buildings, and 1,500 outbuildings. The 2002 estimated suppression costs hover somewhere around $1.6 billion. These unnaturally extreme fires are just one consequence of deteriorating forests and range health that now affects more